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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Food Distribution Administration
Nutrition and Food Conservation Branch
Washington 25, D. C.

FOOD CONSERVATION

A Cooperative Job for All Teachers and Pupils

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The War Food Administration estimates that the food being wasted in the United States in 1943 is equal to the amount required for all our armed forces and Lend-Lease commitments. The food losses between the harvest field and the family dinner table are estimated to amount annually to between 20 and 30 percent of our total food production.

To help win the war and enable this country to do its part in meeting the demand for food in 1943-44, the Office of Education Committee on Consumer Education believes one of the essentials this school year includes joining in the National program to reduce food waste. (See also "Reducing Food Waste" in June 15th issue of Education for Victory. A few reprints are available on request from the U. S. Office of Education.)

AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE

Sanitary engineers keeping records on city garbage dumps in 247 cities have found an average food waste amounting to 225 pounds of usable food per capita per year. Into the garbage can goes 15 percent of all the food the housewife buys--one meal in every seven, three meals a week. It is natural to assume that this waste is declining under pressure of higher prices and rationing. But a recent report of Chicago garbage collections shows an "increase" of 25 percent since Pearl Harbor. Consumption figures show that as a nation we are eating more, and apparently we are wasting more, than in normal times of peace.

Outside the home there is also waste--about 6 percent plate waste in restaurants, 2 percent in transportation, and up to 7 percent in wholesale produce markets. Waste also occurs in retail stores--around 10 percent in the fresh produce department, and 3 percent or more of the total retail food supplies. There is much waste in the harvesting and handling of food on the farm before it gets into distribution channels. Not all, but much of this waste could be prevented. Some of it in stores and restaurants could be reduced by more care, consideration, and cooperation on the part of customers.

Habits of food waste which become deepseated in time of peace cannot be easily changed overnight. All of us need to learn that household food waste occurs not in bushel and pound lots, but in dribblets and bits. We need to learn that eliminating waste of edible vegetables, fruits, bread and other baked goods, our main sources of food waste, will save an average of over 200 pounds of food per person per year. Then we need to attempt vigorously the establishment of new habits which will save this precious food.

We cannot all be food producers, nor can we stop all the waste in food distribution; but we all can be food savers in our own homes, in public eating places, and in the market. According to the War Food Administration, the great quantity of wasted food is the only considerable reservoir of extra food supplies that exists anywhere in the world today for civilians, the armed forces, the Allies, and starving populations. Here is a tremendous educational opportunity for the schools, as basic and important as food itself.

A PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS

The program of food conservation is one through which the school can make a valuable contribution to the understanding of the total food problem.

1. It is a down-to-earth learning device for pupils--deals with a problem both of national importance and of significance to every child.

2. It lends itself to study and discussion in the regular curriculum, and to development through extracurricular projects.

3. It is easily adaptable to every level of instruction from the first through the twelfth grades. Projects outlined can be modified by teachers to fit their own pupils' needs and interests.

4. It is a problem which carries out of the school into the community, thus offering both learning and service opportunities. Programs and posters can be prepared for P. T. A. and other club meetings; essays can be used in the newspapers; canning, insect and rodent extermination, and food-waste studies can be carried on in direct cooperation with community groups.

5. It is a direct link between school and home. Food conservation studied in the school may be reflected in better food habits at home. Many of the projects outlined will strengthen this tie.

DIFFERENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Each teacher in the school, whatever age group she is dealing with, can use her special avenue of approach to the study of this question of food wastage. Teachers and administrators may well plan a year's program in which every teacher and pupil has a part.

Many of the projects listed below suggest activities for pupils in the grades as well as for high-school pupils. Several activities in the accompanying monthly calendar are especially appealing to elementary pupils. In addition, food conservation can be tied in with lessons in geography, writing, arithmetic, as well as hygiene and art work. Elementary school pupils may be especially helpful in carrying food conservation suggestions back to their own homes.

ART

Food waste is a subject easily dramatized in picture form, as these examples suggest:

Dramatize the garbage can as a Fifth Columnist or a thief stealing food, or a swaggering bully taking food from women and children. Caption--"15 percent of our home food supply goes into the garbage pail."

Make literary posters by drawing a famous character from literature who is associated with food. For example--the wasteful Henry VIII, the frugal Benjamin Franklin, or the dainty prioress from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Caption--"Learn a lesson in Wartime Food Conservation from-----."

"Wartime Table Manners" posters. Draw cartoony figures at the table sopping up food with a piece of bread, squeezing the last drops of juice from the grapefruit, or vigorously stirring up the sugar in a cup of coffee. Caption--an appropriate verse, such as "Food not eaten is wartime cheatin'," or "If to gnaw the bone you're tempted, pick it up; fingers shouldn't be exempted when you sup."

Picture of soldier reaching over shoulder of surprised mother peeling potato to seize her hand holding the knife. Caption--"Peeling wastes one-fourth to one-tenth of the Vitamin C and iron in potatoes."

Figures representing Vitamin A and Vitamin C climbing out of pot filled close to top with water. Caption--"Ha, Ha--she didn't know vitamins could swim."

ENGLISH AND SPEECH

English and speech offer opportunities for cooperative projects on the subject of food wastage with students bringing to their English classes subject matter studied in other courses. The best written compositions and speeches, can be publicized in many localities in local papers or presented over the radio, or before Women's Clubs and other organizations. Topics may include: "How to Prevent Waste of Bread," "Cooking Haste Makes Food Waste," "How to Store Vegetables to Prevent Waste," "A Grocer's Tip on How to Save Food," "How We Save Food in Our Home," "Trim America's Waste Line!", "America's Food Goes to War," "My Plan for Preventing Food Waste," and "Why We Have a Victory Garden."

GENERAL SCIENCE

Materials on insect pests and plant diseases can be secured from the vocational agriculture teacher, the county agent, or by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Problems of garbage disposal can be studied under the guidance of the local sanitary engineer. A survey might be made to determine food products needed in production industries in the locality. Study units might be organized around problems such as "Proper Humidity and Temperature for Storing Food," "Causes of Food Decay," and "The Contribution of Science to Reducing Food Waste." A work project in the gathering and interpretation of data can be developed as a survey of local food wastage.

Pupils could prepare a display for the class and perhaps for the entire school showing samples of food products commonly wasted and usable materials that may be made from such products. A chart with a few brief appropriate facts might help to tell the story.

HOME ECONOMICS

Most of the avenues of food waste in the home may be easily studied in home economics classes as the program emphasizes nutrition, planning, preparing, and serving well-balanced meals, packing lunches, preserving food, buying and storing food. Pupils in these classes can use methods which avoid wastes, while having such experiences as the following:

Conserving food by canning, drying, preserving.

Investigating amount and kind of food wasted in the laboratory, the school lunchroom, the home kitchens, the stores.

Comparing vitamin and mineral values of different foods and determining ways these are lost through improper storage or cooking.

Planning meals, making out market orders, and purchasing foods so that they are adequate to meet family needs and tastes but wastes are avoided and left-overs used.

Caring for food purchased for lunchroom school laboratory, or home in such a way that food values are retained and spoilage avoided.

Preparing foods so vitamins and minerals are retained.

Planning meals which use foods too often thrown away, as green tops of vegetables, crumbs of bread, water in which vegetables have been cooked.

Testing recipes and making available to community members those which encourage less wastage through use of local foods or left-overs.

Giving demonstrations of ways to avoid food waste before P. T. A. or other adult groups.

Carrying out projects in their own homes of planning, marketing, preparing, and serving meals for family so that wastes are avoided.

HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Study units can be developed around such topics as "The Place of Nutrition in a Health Program," "The Vitamin Value of Commonly Discarded Foods," "Why Make the Garbage Can the Best Fed Member of the Household?" "Eating for Health and Pleasure," and "Hidden Hungers." The local health officer, public health nurse, or sanitary engineer may be invited to the class to discuss the relationship of food waste to malnourishment and the spread of disease. A group discussion might be organized around the topic, "Why Soldiers Need More and Richer Food Than Civilians."

SOCIAL PROBLEMS, CIVICS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Consideration might be given to such topics as "Effect of War on Food Supplies," "How Food Helps Win the War," "Influence of Food in Making and Maintaining Peace," "Importance of the Hot Springs Food Conference," "Foods Available to Norwegians, British, Russians, Chinese," "The War Food Administration and Its Program," "The Citizen's Responsibility in Relation to Black Markets, Rationing, and Food Shortages." Civic leaders might be invited to the class to discuss these topics and answer questions raised by the pupils.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Food conservation offers unusual opportunities for school administrators to gear the school programs into the community-wide war service. Whatever they undertake outside the school should be coordinated with the food conservation plans of the local Nutrition Committee. In many localities the P. T. A. and other clubs will be carrying on food conservation programs in which the schools may participate. Pupils may make especially helpful contributions in such project as:

1. Establishing a "Clean Plate Club" of members pledged to waste no food.
2. Publicizing through newspapers, radio, speeches, and posters facts pupils have gathered on food waste.
3. Conducting surveys to determine amount, kinds, and sources of local food waste.
4. Joining campaigns to reduce insect and rodent pests.
5. Aiding in home and community canning projects.
6. Planning for next spring's home and school Victory Gardens.
7. Aiding local farmers in harvests and in spring planting.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

Modifiable for Grade or High School

- September--Study of amount of food waste in homes and restaurants, plus a supervised visit to the city garbage dump.
- October --Beginning the collection of clippings about food conservation to be placed on bulletin boards throughout the year.
- November ---Original Thanksgiving playlet about food conservation. A script of the play, "It's Up To You," together with words and music for songs, and a film strip, may be secured free upon request to Marketing Reports Division, War Food Administration, Washington 25, D. C., for use by high-school, college, or community theater groups.
- December --Fledge letter to a service man telling what pupil is doing to help win the war by saving food.
- January ---"Left-over" recipe booklet compiled as gift for mother.
- February --Speeches and essays prepared on food conservation, the best to be used for Washington's Birthday program.
- March --Plans for Victory gardens.
- April --"Jack Sprat" or "Clean Plate" Club meetings, approximately 4, correlating parliamentary law drill with a discussion of food conservation activities.
- May --School and community exhibit of posters, emphasizing food conservation.